

CONTENT MACHINE

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**USE CONTENT MARKETING TO BUILD
A 7-FIGURE BUSINESS WITH ZERO
ADVERTISING**

DAN NORRIS

FOREWORD BY NEIL PATEL

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Join Other Entrepreneurs and Build Your Content Machine

There's a lot covered in this book, and many of these topics are better discussed with a community of likeminded entrepreneurs.

If you are serious about implementing what you learn in this book, I'd love to have you in my private community. It's where I hang out with entrepreneurs and content marketers who get shit done.

Every day we dissect different topics around entrepreneurship, with a focus on online and content marketing.

Visit <http://contentmachine.com/community> to check it out, I'll see you there.

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FOREWORD

BY NEIL PATEL

To say I have committed to content marketing as a key strategy in business would be a huge understatement.

As a content creator I'm a natural and passionate educator. I've been actively creating content for my businesses for over eight years. Even though it was a slow start, I have now used it to build four multi-million dollar businesses.

There's no doubt content marketing is powerful, but it's not easy. The messages, specific instruction, and associated resources in this book will help you do it right.

I started content marketing because I couldn't afford to pay for advertising. Writing a blog post was free, so I wrote a post called "Got Crunched" about being featured on Techcrunch. I figured I'd get some traffic from the popular

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news site Digg.com, and I'd get some attention for my business.

Good news—I got the traffic. Bad news—it didn't stick. So I kept at it, and worked tirelessly on creating content that people cared about.

My first successful post was about 75 designer resources. It was a detailed list of specific things that designers could use. This post was much more successful than others I'd written, and I knew I was onto something.

My plan evolved into writing detailed, highly actionable, long, and practical content.

I've written countless 5,000+ word posts on virtually every online marketing topic you can think of on my sites: **Kissmetrics** (<http://blog.kissmetrics.com>) and **Crazy Egg** (<http://blog.crazyegg.com>). I've even done some 20,000- and 30,000-word guides on **Quick Sprout** (<http://quicksprout.com>). Any time I can think of a project that can be more practical, more useful, more detailed, and more actionable, I will do it.

As a result, I've built blogs with millions of visitors and turned that attention into multi-million dollar business results for my companies.

My approach is to go above and beyond others to get noticed, and that is certainly what has happened. As Dan

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will address in *Content Machine*, it's not enough to create great content. You have to create content so much better than your competition that you really stand out.

There is no point at all in generating mediocre content. Don't just write about your business or your product. Your content has to be educational and solve problems.

Talk to potential customers and figure out what they want. Throw away everything you learned in school. Writing content is a two-way conversation, not a speech. Be personal and make people feel like you are there with them.

Selflessly help your customers. Give the Zappos experience through education.

This is how you get noticed, how you truly help people, and it's how you create content that people care about.

Doing it just for keyword rankings or to hit quotas is a frivolous exercise.

Content Machine will show you exactly how to do all this, and much more.

All the best in your content marketing journey.

Neil Patel

Entrepreneur and Passionate Content Creator

INTRODUCTION

“If you suck at sales, can you be an entrepreneur?”

From 2002 to 2006, when I was working a job, I assumed the answer was no.

The entrepreneurs I looked up to, like Richard Branson and Steve Jobs, seemed to be epic salespeople. I figured entrepreneurship wasn't for me. Besides, my job was good, my income was going up every year, and things were okay.

But in 2006 I did start a business. My income took a big hit, and I continued to ask myself this question for the next eight years. I asked it every day in the seven years of my first business, a failed web agency. I asked it every day in the year of my second business, a failed software startup.

I asked it for the last time on June 27, 2013.

In the year prior, I'd spent \$60,000 to buy 12 months of runway for my software startup. I had two weeks left, was

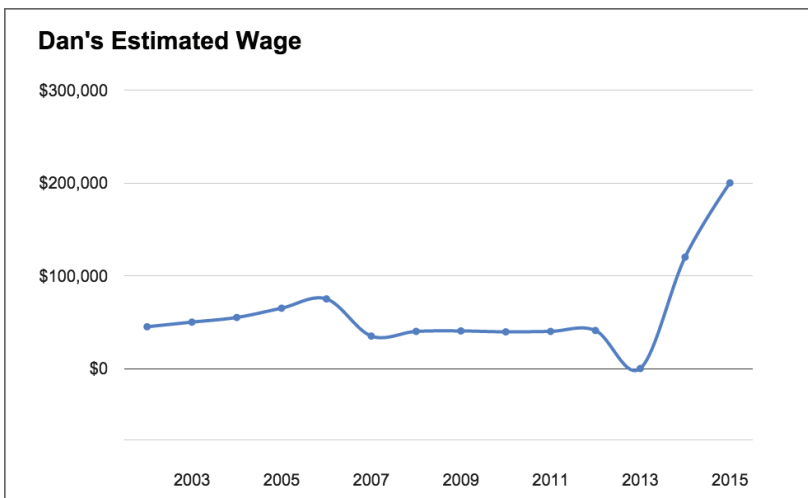
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losing \$1,500/month, and found myself in the process of starting to look for jobs.

It was my lowest point as an entrepreneur. I'd decided that maybe I wasn't an entrepreneur after all. My kids were at the age where they were starting to ask what I did for a living. What would I tell them?

It's now June 2015. In the last few months I've spoken as a business expert in five cities around the world, I have a best-selling book on Amazon, and I run four businesses; including one of the fastest growing WordPress support companies in the world, WP Curve. We have built a team of over 45 developers in seven countries, worked with over 4,000 clients, and turn over a million or more in Australian dollars per year.

My income chart looks like one hell of a rollercoaster ride:



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In the end, I figured out I could be an entrepreneur. And I still suck at sales.

You Are Lucky!

If you had been born just one generation ago and I had told you there was a way to build a million-dollar business without spending a cent on advertising, while at the same time helping thousands of people, you would have told me I was crazy.

Yet here we are. The most powerful and valuable form of marketing is at your fingertips, freely available and almost free to use.

“Sure,” you say, “it’s easier than ever to create content, but there’s also way more competition.”

Really? Take a look at your top three or four competitors and see what sort of quality they are putting out. I’d be willing to bet it’s not great.

If that’s the case, you have a huge opportunity waiting for you. This book will help you take it.

I’m on a plane writing this—my second book—only two weeks after the launch of my first, *The 7 Day Startup*. I gave away 13,000 free copies of that book on Amazon Kindle

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in the first week. It took me six months to put together, including 200+ emails to both my editor and my formatter.

Giving it away was an easy decision, because it's what I do with all of my projects: create lots of useful content, give it away for free, and use that attention to build a business.

I've taken this approach from day one of my WordPress website support service, WP Curve. In the two years since we launched, we've spent a total of \$181.23 on advertising, and haven't done anything that would represent traditional "sales" work.

Instead of paid advertising, I focused on creating content and giving it away for free. *The 7 Day Startup* was only a tiny exercise compared to all of the content I've put together over the years. In fact, at 26,000 words, it represents just 4% of the total amount. Since 2008 I've written around 600,000 words, which adds up to a book longer than *War and Peace*. I haven't charged a cent for any of it.

We still don't spend money on advertising for WP Curve. We have a full time content manager, paid guest writers, and continue to focus on content marketing as our only marketing strategy.

Content Machine will show you how to do the same thing. I just don't want it to take you two years and half a million words to get there.

Quality Over Quantity

I was flying blind when I first started content marketing. I followed the general “write every day” advice and focused too much on the amount of content I was creating. The problem was, 90% of it went pretty much unnoticed.

In this book I’m going to show you a simple, three-piece framework for ensuring this doesn’t happen to you. For now, let’s go through some of my early numbers:

- Since 2008, I’ve created around 700 pieces of content.
- At least 400 of those were in the last two years.
- I’ve sent an email to my list almost every week.
- I wrote about 350 on-site articles before I had an article with more than 10 tweets (that should be ringing alarm bells).
- Almost every article I wrote prior to two years ago still has less than ten tweets, with only a handful with just over.
- I didn’t really start believing we could build a business using content marketing until last year!

I invested too much time in every type of content you can imagine:

- I did intense content creation sessions, including one in August 2012 where I wrote 13 articles in one day.
- In one week of December 2012, I launched a new podcast, created ten podcast episodes, wrote six blog posts, and appeared on three other sites.

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- I spent weeks working on single pieces of content that got less than 100 total views.

I ran webinars; created free plugins; designed infographics; commissioned funny illustrations; recorded podcasts; produced videos; wrote long posts (5,000+ words); crafted interactive/graphic content; created detailed step-by-step marketing guides; built email courses and sequences (some as long as 52 emails); developed video training; wrote guest posts; composed interactive guest posts; combined writing, illustration, and audio; recorded hundreds of guest interviews; presented at conferences; wrote media releases, ebooks, and books; targeted articles at press outlets; conducted significant influencer outreach; answered questions in forums; did AMAs; and much, much more.

You name it, I've tried it.

I loved creating the content, but there was a problem. I measured myself based on how much content I created, not how much traction that content got. The quantity, not the quality.

Like Neil Patel, I eventually worked out that one spectacularly successful piece of content was infinitely more valuable than 100 pieces of content that go unnoticed.

By using the tools in this book, you will hopefully get the fun without the struggle.

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Throughout the years I've become passionate about content marketing. I've helped other people build their businesses with content, and I've reached out to people who are getting great results with their own content.

Most people don't see great returns—in fact, according to the 2015 Content Marketing Institute (CMI) research on business to business marketers, only 38% regard their content marketing as effective.¹ The respondees are mostly CMI members, so you can imagine what the average business owner thinks.

I've made it my mission to ensure you are not one of the people who regards content marketing as ineffective.

This book will help you achieve a few things:

First, you will fully understand what content marketing is and how a working content marketing strategy is put together. You may decide it's not for you, or you may jump in headfirst, screeching with excitement. Either way, you need to understand it before you decide.

Second, you will learn a simple three-step framework for content marketing success. It will help you focus on the right things, as opposed to simply “writing every day.”

On top of that, I'll make your life easier by providing a number of downloadable frameworks and assets that you

can plug into your business immediately to ensure your content marketing strategy is effective.

Start Taking Action on Content Marketing Now

I'm big on taking action. I hope you take action with this book, be it by creating a blog, re-working some old content, or releasing a podcast. If you implement one idea or like a quote in this book, I'd appreciate if you could share it with the #contentmachine hashtag on Twitter or Instagram. You can tag me if you like (@thedannorris). I love re-sharing the mentions, and it's great for me to see what parts of the book are having an impact. I've also put together a bunch of resources for this book to support every chapter. Visit <http://contentmachine.com/resources> for free access to frameworks, resources, quotes, and every link mentioned in the book. I want this to be the most actionable book on content marketing in the world. I want to show you specific examples of entrepreneurs who have made content marketing work, and then give you the tools to do the same for yourself. In short, regardless of your experience with online content right now, my goal is for you to finish this book and be in a position to build a high-growth business without spending a cent on advertising.

Let's get started.

Notes

1. Joe Pulizzi, “New B2B Content Marketing Research: Focus on Documenting Your Strategy,” *Content Marketing Institute*, Z Squared Media LLC, last modified October 1, 2014, <http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2014/10/2015-b2b-content-marketing-research/>.

CHAPTER 1

HOW TO BUILD A BUSINESS WITH CONTENT MARKETING

Let's start with a super simple definition for content marketing:

Content marketing is releasing something interesting that grabs attention for a business and builds trust.

That's it! Easy, right?

For some companies, like Red Bull, it means hundreds of staff in professional studios creating multi-million dollar feature films and releasing them for free. For others it means writing blog posts, putting recipes and nice images on Instagram, or recording a podcast.

The most important pieces of the content marketing definition are attention and trust.

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You want to put out content that helps people, gets them to pay attention to you and your business, and, over time, garners their trust. These people become part of your community, they help promote your content, refer people to your business, and may even become partners or customers.

This book is a form of content marketing. If you are reading it, I have your attention. By the end, you will feel like you know me, and you will trust me more than you did before. You will know of my businesses and you will be part of my worldwide community of passionate content marketers.

The idea has been around for hundreds of years. One of the earliest recognized forms of content marketing was a magazine started in 1895 by John Deere called *The Furrow*. It provided interesting information about farming and built a worldwide following for the brand which continues to this day.

With the emergence of the web and social media, content marketing has exploded. The core idea is the same, but the methods for doing it—and, more importantly, doing it well—have changed dramatically.

Are You a Blogger or a Content Marketer?

So you're fired up about content marketing and ready to start or improve on your own content strategy.

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But first, I'm going to fill you in on some bad news. I get hundreds of comments and emails from people who are frustrated because, for the vast majority, content marketing does not seem to work.

Out of all the failure I see, I can narrow almost all of it down with one simple question:

If I were to ask you what the most important task as a content marketer is, what would you say?

How about you? Did you say “creating content” or “blogging”?

If you did, then you made the mistake that most failed content marketers make. You see yourself as a creator of content or a blogger but you don't see yourself as a marketer.

You have assumed that your job is to create content, when really your job is to market a business.

Luckily this book isn't a book on how to write blog posts. It's a book about how to build a business using content marketing. Let's look at how that works. There are 3 components.



Of course you need great content that grabs the attention of your audience and builds their trust. The ability to identify what great content is and do it at scale on an ongoing basis is what the majority of this book focuses on.

Creating great content is not enough, because without a great business, you are sending attention to something that is broken (or non-existent).

Finally there needs to be a logical link between the two. I call this Monetization Logic. I will talk more about that towards the end of this chapter. For now let's look at how to build a great business.

10 Characteristics Of A High-Growth Business

After nine years of entrepreneurship, I've had a lot of ups and downs. I've had businesses that completely failed, one that stagnated for seven years, and others that grew to multiple six-figures in under a year. I've learned that

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some businesses are fundamentally designed to grow and some are not. I've paid particular attention to the startup world where growth is worshipped while staying away from accepted small business advice.

Through my own experience and observations of other successful companies, especially those I covered in my first book, *The 7 Day Startup*, I've narrowed these traits down to 10 Characteristics of High-Growth Companies. If these are not present in your business, you will struggle to make any form of marketing work.

When someone isn't able to grow their business from high-quality, differentiated, scalable content marketing, something is fundamentally flawed in the way the business is designed. They lack one or all of these characteristics.

I see these traits in businesses that are designed to scale without their founders. If you are going to focus on building a content machine, you need something that will grow without your constant attention.

Some of these things might challenge you. Not everyone wants to build a high-growth startup. However, rather than dismissing them right away, I encourage you to take some time to consider the possible implications for your business. If there are things you can apply to create a more sound business, it makes sense to implement them now so you get a better return from your content marketing.

1. They Are Fundamentally Profitable

What happens when the business expands, and the founder isn't capable of doing all the work anymore?

If the profit margin in your business is set so you are unable to replace yourself and still make a profit, then you are in trouble. Despite what you may hear, it's not an easy problem to solve. You think you can just raise prices, but that may send your customers to more affordable competitors. Your business might be fundamentally unprofitable.

Here's a very simple calculation I recommend every business owner should perform: Figure out everything that goes into serving a customer. How many hours will you need from X, Y, and Z staff members to complete the tasks, and how much do those staff members cost. Imagine your business is at a reasonable size, and that you have all of the tools and technologies necessary to manage a decent number of clients. Distribute the costs across those clients to come up with a rough idea of how much it's going to cost to deliver your service. Take that number and, at the very least, double it. That is your price.

Charge that much now, and see if your business grows. If it doesn't, you might have a problem—and no amount of content is going to fix a fundamentally unprofitable business.

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Pricing is a complicated topic in itself, but many businesses haven't done this basic calculation, and they end up running fundamentally unprofitable businesses. Then they wonder why their content marketing isn't building them a profitable business.

2. They Operate In A Large Market

Common business advice tells you to find a small niche and go after it. I don't like this advice, and I don't see successful high-growth companies doing it.

The main difference between my first business and my third was the size of the market we were in. My first, the failed web agency, targeted mainly local businesses in my geographical area. My third, WP Curve, is available to anyone in the world who uses WordPress (70 million websites).

Being in a large market has resulted in constant, high, and at times almost unmanageable growth. It also means we can be broad with our content and build a lot of support from a large community.

Your content marketing is often available to the whole world. If you can figure out a way for your business to be just as available, then your content will have much more power.

3. They Naturally Build Assets Over Time

All high-growth companies have some sort of assets that set them apart from their competition. It could be the IP for software; it could be their people; it could be their brand. This is something that small businesses don't often think about, but investors in large companies obsess over.

The question they ask is, "What is stopping someone else from coming along and taking what you have?" This is very difficult for a small business to build on when they are starting out, but it's something worth thinking about for the future. Is your business structured in a way that makes it extremely easy for competitors to come along and do the same thing? Can customers just leave and go somewhere else without any difficulty?

If that's the case, what can you do about it? Can you invest in your brand, your people, or something else? Can you get legal protections like trademarks? Can you build technical expertise or something physical and tangible?

4. They Have a Simple, Relatable Differentiator

I noticed that high-growth companies tend to go after existing problems, and they solve them with a unique twist. This means they don't have to convince people of the fundamental problem—people are paying for a solution already. They just have to stand out with one major

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differentiating factor, and ideally it will be one people will talk about because they care about it.

Here are some examples:

- WP Curve: Like a developer **except** unlimited fixes 24/7.
- Uber: Like taxis **except** cleaner, safer, cheaper, nice smelling, and they actually arrive.
- Airbnb: Like hotels **except** you get more for less.
- Trello: Like post-it notes, **except** on your computer.
- Evernote: Like your brain, **except** you can't forget.

If the part after the “except” is something customers care about enough to talk about, then you are off to a good start. If your business has no differentiating aspect, or has one that customers don't care about and won't talk about, then you are in trouble.

5. They Focus On Growing Consistent Revenue At a High Lifetime Value

Not all revenue is equal. Predictability in business is highly underrated. Businesses that are successful in the long term generally have a predictable revenue model. Those categorized by huge peaks and troughs, one-off launches, and up-and-down months are far more difficult.

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If you operate a business with monthly consistent revenue (ideally recurring), then everything is much easier. You can invest in tools, technology, and people that you need to grow, because you are confident you will be able to afford it next month. You can say “no” to certain customers or projects, because you already have a good solid base of revenue. You can accurately estimate your profit margin and your cashflow.

If your business is cyclical and inconsistent in revenue, think about how you can *make* it more consistent. Making less money on a recurring monthly basis might be a better long-term option, as long as you still have an acceptable profit margin.

It’s also important that over time, you make a reasonable amount of money from each customer (called Lifetime Value). Building a business by selling a one off \$20 product is going to be a lot tougher than a business that sells an \$80 monthly subscription. If you don’t have a reasonable lifetime value, you won’t get adequate reward for your hard work getting the attention and building the trust.

6. They Invest In A Memorable Brand

Design and general execution is one of the most underrated marketing strategies in business. I’ve noticed that most successful new companies have very short, memorable, and

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well-executed brands. They fall easily into conversation, and they spread via word of mouth like wildfire.

Think about: “We caught an Uber,” “Put it in Slack,” etc.

Make sure you have thought about building a real brand in your business. Not just a website with a bunch of keywords in it, but a strong brand—ideally short and memorable—that is well executed with world-class design that stands for specific values. People want to fall in love with brands, so don’t skimp out on this aspect in your business. No one will ever *tell* you they decided to use a competitor because they didn’t trust your overall design, but it happens constantly.

Remember that you aren’t a designer. Once you are up and running, this is something you need to take seriously and get some real help on—and not from your friends on Facebook.

Find a designer who can execute something of top quality for you, so you can truly compete or even stand out from the competition.

The best part is that content is a huge brand builder. If you can focus on your design and keep your content at the same level, pushing a similar message, design, and content can work together explosively.

7. They Are Started By A Team, Not An Individual

A lot of solo entrepreneurs struggle with the same issue: the founder is responsible for too many different jobs. That works only as long as the founder is capable of doing those jobs.

It's extremely rare for a decent company to be built by an individual and not a founding team. Just look at the startup world for guidance.

- Almost every startup I can think of had a founding team.
- Paul Graham, the founder of Y Combinator and one of the world's leading startup experts, cites "single founder" as the top item in his list of why startups fail.
- Incubators that are designed to find the highest potential customers, invest in them, and grow them rarely accept a company without a founding team.
- Investors will rarely invest in a startup with one founder.
- An individual with all of the necessary skills to run a great business is like a unicorn. Maybe they exist? Maybe they don't? I've never met one.
- Like every entrepreneur, I tend to think I can do everything and am "a jack of all trades". But I had zero success until I started businesses with other people.

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- Running a business is an emotional rollercoaster of epic proportions. You can't ride it alone—get someone else on board.

Think long and hard about this one. Can you realistically be an epic entrepreneur as well as a world class content marketer?

When I started WP Curve, I agreed to give half of the company away so I could start it with someone else. In two years, the company became five times the size that my last business was after *seven* years. I would rather own 50% of a million-dollar company than 100% of a \$150k company.

8. They Know How To Say “No,” And They Do It Often

Great businesses choose what they are going to do, and they do it extremely well. It takes a long time, generally a lot of people, and a lot of money to truly achieve “world class” status. If your business has multiple focuses rather than one main task, it might be a sign that you are in trouble. You might not have enough confidence in your ability to meet a world-class standard and attract enough customers.

Bolting more sub-par solutions onto your main service will not solve that problem—it will only complicate your business and increase the likelihood of running into a fundamentally unprofitable model.

Learn how to say “no”. Instead, reach “world class” status at one thing. Be confident that you can use your content marketing skills to get so much attention for this one thing that there will be plenty of demand.

9. They Understand The Power Of Monthly Growth

I mentioned consistent revenue above, but let me illustrate the power of monthly growth with an example. Say your business is currently doing \$6,000 per month, and it’s growing at 15% every month.

After two years, you will have a two-million-dollar annual business.

After three years, you will have a ten-million-dollar annual business.

Of course, nothing is ever as simple as growing from two to ten million in one year. However, it illustrates the power of monthly growth. Great businesses understand this and they obsess over it.

Don’t think so much about how much money you will make in a year. Think about how much you will grow every single month, and before you know it your business will be significantly bigger.

This is also a great way to think about the metrics for your content. I noticed our blog traffic grew by about 5% per

month in the early days. At first it didn't seem like much, but with consistent monthly growth, before we knew it, we had tens of thousands of monthly visitors.

10. They Think “Long Term”

Great businesses avoid get-rich-quick schemes and over-optimization. They focus on solid, long-term strategies.

Getting in the press, building a public profile, putting out useful content, fostering important relationships, and developing a great company culture are all examples of solid long-term strategies. These aren't going to result in quick wins, but they *are* what creates great companies.

Think about these things from the day you start your business and act as if you are building a brand that you can pass onto your children. This will drive you to excellence and steer you away from the latest marketing fads that probably won't work for you anyway.

Think about all of these characteristics and how you can build them into your own business. If your content isn't getting the results you want, think about whether there is something fundamental here that needs to be addressed.

Don't forget to review these characteristics step by step and make sure the business you build is worth sending leads to.

Monetization Logic

Sometimes content marketing fails because the business is fundamentally broken. Other times it fails because the content is not good enough. But content marketing can also fail if both the business and the content are sound. This happens when the business strategy includes poor monetization logic. That is, there is no logical link between the content and the business.

Monetization logic is a simple “Yeah that makes sense” test that is often missing from people’s content marketing efforts. The easiest way to determine whether it exists is to ask the question, “Does it make sense that someone would consume this content and then go on to become a customer?”

Let’s look at some examples.

Moz (<https://moz.com/blog>) has a great blog with useful content about how to rank well in Google. Their business is selling software to help people rank well in Google. So it makes sense that someone interested in content about ranking well in Google would also be interested in buying software that helps them rank well in Google. This is an example of strong monetization logic and they’ve built a \$30m business off the back of their content.

Intercom (<https://blog.intercom.io/>) has a great blog with useful content about how to build software companies.

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Their business is a messaging app for software companies. So it makes sense that someone interested in building a software company would also be interested in using their messaging software. Again, this is great monetization logic.

If Moz created content about building a software company, it wouldn't work nearly as well because it doesn't make sense. If Intercom created content about ranking well in Google, that wouldn't translate into a good stream of leads.

Another example where people get monetization logic wrong is geographically. Say you run a local agency that builds websites for bricks and mortar businesses. You have an internationally popular design blog that breaks down the amazing design work you do. It might get huge worldwide traction, but it fails the monetization logic test. Most of the people who see the content aren't local and therefore can't become a customer. It's also failing at a topic level because it will appeal to designers, and designers won't become customers of another design firm.

It doesn't mean you have to specifically create content only for your customers, but it does mean it has to generally make sense.

There needs to be a logical link between your content, your audience, and whatever it is you are selling. A decent percentage of your audience should be potential customers

or potentially refer other customers to your service. If they aren't, then the monetization logic is off.

Think about this as you grow your content marketing strategy. Does it make sense that consumers of your content would help your business (by becoming customers or referring customers), or does something need to be tweaked to make sure this logic is in place?

The Content Marketing Leap of Faith

Okay, so where are we at?

You know the basics of content marketing and why it often fails. You understand you need great content, a great business, and a logical link between them.

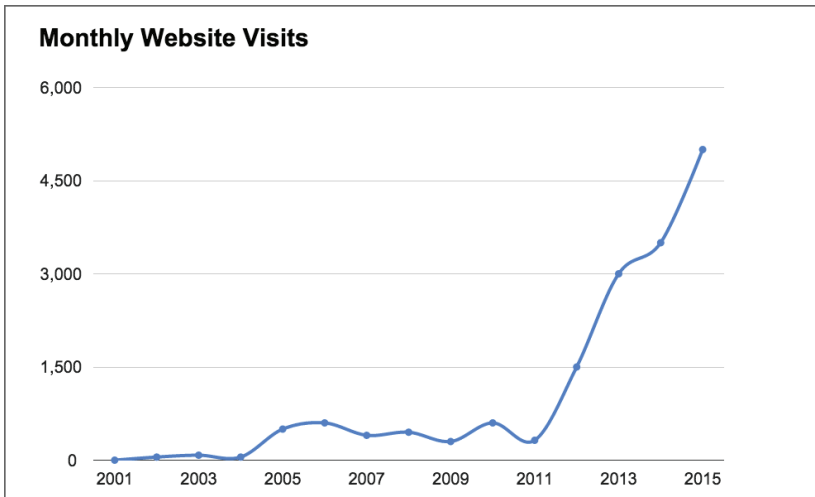
You are good to go, right?

Not quite. There's one more reality check.

The content marketing leap of faith.

There's another important reason why people fail at content marketing. It's a reason that is visible on the Google Analytics charts of most successful blogs. They look something like this.

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Hopefully you spotted it: they give up too soon. It takes a long time to build momentum, and most people don't have the patience to back something that isn't delivering immediate results.

Content marketing, by its nature, is a long-term exercise. Most top blogs create content for months or years before they hit traction. This is the norm, and there are a few reasons for it.

1. Content marketing is about building trust, and you can't build trust overnight. Trust is crucial online. People won't rush to read and share new sites. You have to earn trust over time, and you do that by consistently building your content brand. Unless you are a well-known entrepreneur, you are going to have to do the work.

2. It takes a while for some channels to kick in. For example, Google favors older sites with more links and more content. If we create an article right now on WordPress speed, it will rank well. But if we did that in our first week of business, it wouldn't rank at all. As it turns out, we do have an article on WordPress speed that was written some time ago. That particular article got 5,000 visits just from Google last month. It's hard to place a value on that amount of free traffic just for one article. We get tens of thousands of visitors every month to posts that were written years ago.
3. It takes a long time to endear a valuable community member. Much like physical communities, you can't just waltz in and expect to be at the top right away. It takes time for *you* to learn what the community members like and for *them* to learn that you are a valuable contributor.
4. It takes time to find your place. I've mentioned how critical it is to work out your core vision and work out what your audience loves. This is hard to do quickly, and you should expect some trial and error on that journey.
5. Good content breeds more good content. It could be the value gained by linking between blog posts, doing guest content on topics that went well on your site, or doing another post similar to one that did well on your site. Whatever it is, there is an "economies of

CONTENT MACHINE

scale” effect with content marketing. As you create content and you craft some winners, it becomes a lot easier to get more.

I experienced this myself in the years between 2008 and 2013. I really struggled to find my place, had patchy results, and created a lot of content that didn’t result in much benefit. In 2013 I hit my stride. I released a bunch of posts that garnered over 200 tweets each and thousands of visits; I started getting mentioned on my favorite podcasts; I appeared on other posts as a guest author; and I was voted as Australia’s top small business blogger by the readers of *Smarter Business Ideas Magazine*.

Before 2013, the highest number of monthly visits I had ever gotten to the site was 5,000. In 2013 I was getting 10,000 per month, and in 2014 I was getting 60,000 per month.

At some point along the way, I had to take a leap of faith. I had to accept that it was going to take me a long time to figure out how to get big results from the content, but I *would* figure it out. I trusted myself to work out what content I loved creating and how to best position it on my site. I worked through the void of limited results to our current position of ultimate competitive advantage, where we can acquire customers without spending a cent.

DAN NORRIS

With the lessons in this book, you can get there quicker than I did. But it won't happen overnight.

Take the leap of faith.